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ABSTRACT

These four fact sheets address a number of issues relating to women in the work force. The first, "An Overview of Women in the Work Force," offers a look at the numbers of women in the labor force, the occupational categories represented by women workers, women in professional and nonprofessional occupations, and women in nontraditional occupations. These sorts of statistics are also provided: marital status, working mothers, heads of households, educational level, earnings, and union membership. The fact sheet, "An Overview of Women of Color in the Work Force," presents figures on numbers of minority women in the work force, occupational categories, earnings, unemployment rates, heads of households, working women with children, and union membership. The fact sheet, "Women, Work, and Poverty," provides statistics on working women in poverty, working women in poverty with children, heads of households, benefits, income, educational attainment, and working women in poverty earning minimum wage. The fourth fact sheet, "Secretaries and Clerical Workers," offers a look at the numbers of women employed in clerical occupations, their earnings, salary wage differentials for female and male clerical workers, temporary workers, homebased clerical workers, and union membership of workers in clerical occupations. Information is also provided on hazards of working with video display terminals and barriers to advancement in clerical occupations. (YLB)

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FACT SHEETS ON WORKING WOMEN

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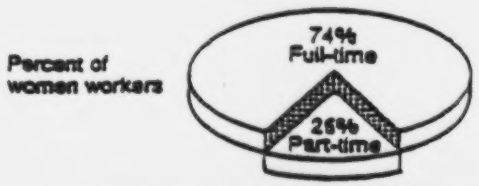
An Overview of Women in the Work Force

Women workers make up 45% of the U.S. labor force. In 1987, 66% of all women ages 16 to 64 were working for pay.

The number of women in the labor force has almost tripled in the past 37 years — from 18 million in 1950 to more than 53 million in 1987. This explosive growth has been most dramatic among women 25 to 34 years old. In 1950 only 34% of women in that age bracket worked, while in 1987 the percentage increased to 72%.

Three out of four women workers are employed full time (35 or more hours a week).



Of all employed women in 1987, 76% were in non–professional occupations: clerical, sales, service, factory, or plant jobs.

According to the Department of Labor, women workers in 1987 were divided into the following occupational categories:

Managerial and Professional	24.4%
Technicians	3.2%
Sales	12.9%
Administrative Support, including Clerical	29.0%
Service	18.1%
Craft	2.3%
Operatives	9.0%
Farm	1.1%

The percentage of women in managerial and professional occupations increased from 18.4% of the female work force in 1975 to 24.4% in 1987.

In 1987, more than 12 million women were in managerial or professional occupations. About three–fifths of these 12 million women were in professional specialties, but the majority (57%) of women professional workers were in two traditionally female jobs — teaching and nursing.

In 1987 women in non–professional occupations continued to work in jobs that were largely sex segregated.

Of the more than 38 million women employed in non–professional occupations in 1987, 24 million (63%) worked in female–dominated jobs (those in which 75% or more of the workers were women).

Only 11% of all women workers were in non–traditional occupations (those in which 75% or more of the workers are men).

Traditional jobs held by women

Occupation	Percent female, 1987
Secretaries	98%
Child care workers	97%
Registered nurses	95%
Bookkeepers	92%
Sewing machine operators	91%
Waiters/waitresses	85%

Non–traditional jobs

Occupation	Percent Female, 1987
Construction workers	2%
Mechanics	3%
Engineers	7%
Truck drivers	10%
Police and detectives	11%
Lawyers	19%

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The majority of married women today work outside the home for pay.

In 1987, three out of five wives were in the labor force (62.6%). In 1950, only one in four was a labor force participant (25%).

Labor force participation rates of women 16 to 64 years old by marital status, 1987.

Never married	67.7%
Married	62.6%
Married, separated	66.3%
Divorced	81.0%
Widowed	52.8%

In 1987, 64.7% of all women with children under 18 years old worked outside the home.

In all, 21 million mothers were in the labor force. The most rapid increase in the rate of labor force participation since 1970 has been among women with children under 3 years old: in 1987, 53% of those mothers were in the work force, up from 26% in 1970. About 81% of employed single mothers and 68% of employed married mothers worked full time.

69% of women who head households with children under 18 were in the labor force in 1987.

The number of women who head households has more than doubled in the past 27 years, from 4.5 million in 1960 to 10.9 million in 1987, when one of every four mothers in the labor force was maintaining her own family.

In 1986 year–round, full–time women workers who had graduated from college earned $22,412 on average; men workers with high school diplomas earned $24,701.

Women who had completed one to three years of college earned less than men who completed the eighth grade. Their average annual earnings were $18,516 and $18,541 respectively.

Women make on average 64¢ for every $1.00 earned by men.

In 1986 women working year round, full time had median annual earnings of $16,230. This was $9,030 less than the median for men workers.

	Annual Earnings		Women's earnings as percent of men's
	Women	Men	
1960	$3,293	$5,417	60.8%
1970	5,323	8,966	59.4%
1980	11,197	18,612	60.2%
1984	14,750	23,218	63.6%
1986	16,230	25,260	64.2%

In 1986 all families maintained by women had median incomes of $13,647 compared to $24,962 for families maintained by men.

According to the Census Bureau, men who head households without a spouse present had 45% more money than women in the same position. Even when men and women maintaining families worked full time, year round, women had median annual incomes of $21,958 compared to $31,629 for men—a 31% gap.

60% of all minimum wage earners ($3.35 per hour) are women.

In 1986 the poverty line for a family of four was $11,203. A single mother of three working full time, at minimum wage earned $6,968. After a year's work, this mother was living $4,235 below the poverty line.

34% of all labor union members are women.

There are 99.3 million employed wage and salary workers in the U.S. 17 million belong to unions; 5.8 million are women. 13% of women workers are members of unions and 15% are represented by union contracts. In 1987 union women earned on average $97 more per week—over $5,000 per year—than non–union women.

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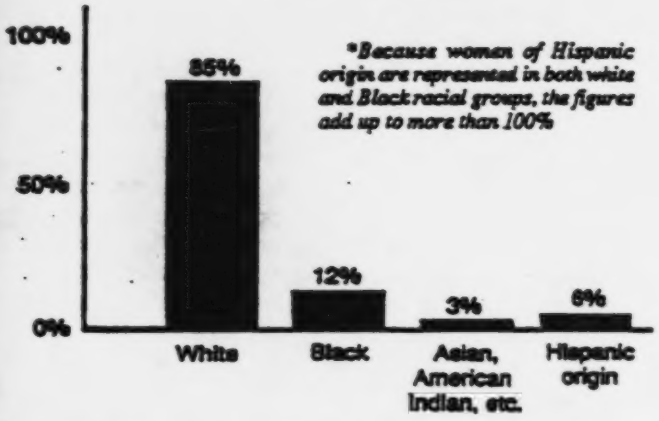
An Overview of Women of Color in the Work Force

Approximately 20% of women workers in the United States are women of color.

In 1987 there were 6.5 million Black women and more than 1.5 million American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian and Pacific Islander women in the U.S. labor force. There were also 3.4 million women of Hispanic origin.

Percentage of women in U.S. labor force, by race and Hispanic origin*



*Because women of Hispanic origin are represented in both white and Black racial groups, the figures add up to more than 100%

Half of all Black and Hispanic women workers were in clerical and service occupations in 1987.

Job Categories	Percent distribution Black women	Hispanic women	White women
Managerial and Professional	17.2%	14.7%	25.3%
Technicians	3.2%	1.9%	3.2%
Sales	9.1%	11.2%	13.4%
Administrative/Clerical	26.4%	26.8%	29.5%
Service	28.0%	23.3%	16.8%
(Private Household)	3.6%	3.8%	1.8%
Craft	2.0%	3.7%	2.3%
Operatives	13.7%	16.9%	8.2%
Farm	0.4%	1.5%	1.2%

In 1986 women of color earned 12% to 17% less than white women.

On average, women of all races working year round, full time earned 64¢ for every $1.00 earned by men.

1986 median annual income for year–round, full–time workers by sex and race

	Females	Males	Ratio of female to male earnings
White	$17,101	$26,617	64.2%
Black	14,964	18,766	79.7%
Hispanic	14,191	17,008	83.4%

Median annual income as percent of white males'

White Males	100.0%
Black Males	70.5%
Hispanic Males	63.8%
White Females	64.2%
Black Females	56.2%
Hispanic Females	53.3%

In 1987 women of color continued to have significantly higher rates of unemployment than white women.

The unemployment rate for all women decreased from 7.1% in 1986 to 6.2% in 1987. The rate of unemployment for Black women in 1987 was 13.2%, for Hispanic women, 8.9%, and white women, 5.2%.

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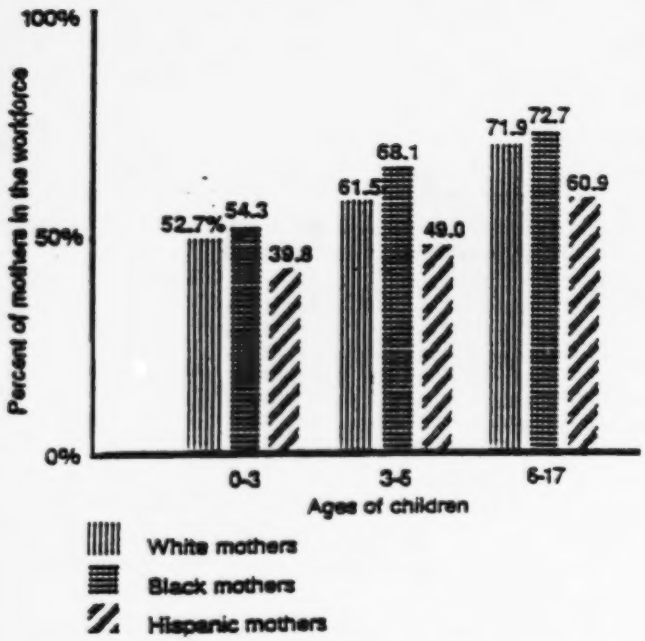
In 1986, 42% of Black families, 23% of Hispanic families and 13% of white families were headed by women.

Of these families headed by women, more than half of the Black and Hispanic families had incomes below the poverty level. Of these heads of households in poverty, almost one in two Black women (41%) and approximately one in three Hispanic women (31%) were in the labor force in 1986.

Black women with children under 18 were more likely to be in the labor force than white or Hispanic women with children.

Labor force participation rates of Black and white women with children under 18, by race and Hispanic origin March, 1987



In 1986 the median annual income for Black married–couple families in which the husband worked was $24,304, compared to $17,985 for Black families headed by women who worked full time, year round.

Type of family	Black families	Hispanic families	White families
Married–couple/ husband worked	$24,304	$21,571	$35,521
Married–couple/ both worked	37,679	33,950	42,957
Female head of household/ worked year round, full time	17,985	17,306	23,353

A higher proportion of Black women workers are members of labor unions than white or Hispanic women workers.

In 1987, 19% of Black women workers belonged to unions, while 22% were represented by union contracts. The comparative figures for white women workers were 12% and 14% and for Hispanic women, 13% and 15%. Black women union members working full time, had median weekly earnings of $106 more than Black women who were not union members. Hispanic women union members working full time earned $72 more a week than non–union Hispanic women. If Black and Hispanic women union members worked the entire year they earned, respectively, $5,512 and $3,744 more than comparable non–union members.

Cites: All statistics on these fact sheets are derived from Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau data.

About the Commission: The National Commission on Working Women was created to focus on the needs and concerns of the approximately 80% of women in the work force who are concentrated in low–paying, low–status jobs in service industries, clerical occupations, retail stores, factories, and plants. In January, 1987, NCWW merged with Wider Opportunities for Women, Inc., a national women's employment and training advocacy organization.

The NCWW encourages broad distribution of this fact sheet. Those interested in reproducing it are simply required to inform our office.

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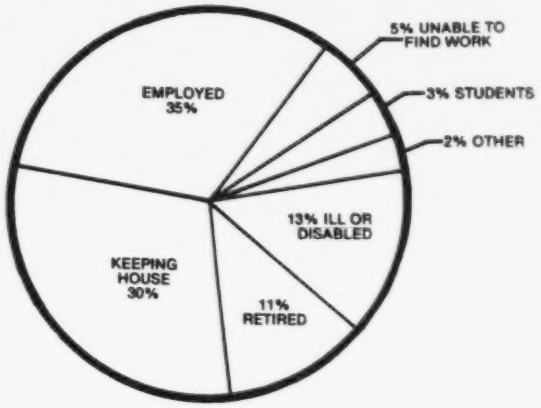
Women, Work and Poverty
A FACT SHEET

In 1986, 12.4 million American women* were living in poverty. Of these women, 4.4 million were in the work force.

*age is 18 or over

One in three women in poverty is employed or looking for paid employment.



Half of working women in poverty have full-time jobs when they are at work. Seventeen percent worked full time, year round in 1986.

2.3 million working women in poverty —more than half—are mothers of children under 18.

- Forty-two percent of mothers in poverty are in the labor force. More than half (53%) work full time.
- Sixty-five percent of working mothers in poverty are single, separated, divorced or widowed.
- Fifty-four percent are heads of households.
- Thirty-five percent are married and living with their spouses.

One in every two working women in poverty who head families was employed in a service occupation in 1986.

Occupational Category	Percent
Managerial and Professional	5.2%
Technicians	1.4
Sales	14.1
Admin. Support, incl. Clerical	13.7
SERVICE	**46.6**
Craft	3.3
Operatives and laborers	14.0
Farm	1.4

Research shows that service industry jobs are the least likely to have paid health insurance or paid sick leave and vacation benefits.

Women in poverty are often forced to choose between working at low-wage jobs—without health benefits—and going on welfare, which provides Medicaid benefits. The majority of women on welfare are eager to find jobs, as long as their employment does not jeopardize the health of their children.

The median income for a woman in poverty who was maintaining a family alone and working full time, year round was $7056 in 1986.

Depending on the number of children in her family, she was even deeper in poverty.

1986 Poverty Levels	Difference from $7,056
Woman with one child $7,133	- $ 77
Woman with two children 8,738	- 1,682
Woman with three children 11,168	- 4,112

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Child care costs can be prohibitive for working mothers in poverty.

Nationally, the average cost of child care for one preschool child is $57.00 a week. A woman working full time at minimum wage would have to spend up to 40% of her paycheck for child care.

With a median educational attainment of 11.6 years, women in poverty have an adequate education to earn a living wage.

- Forty-seven percent of all women in poverty are high school graduates, as are 53.5% of female heads of households. One in seven female householders in poverty have one or more years of college education.

However, the average wage differential between men and women gives women approximately 35% less money than men despite their educational attainment:

- Men with only an 8th grade education working full time, year round in 1986 had a median income of $18,541. The median income for women who have completed one to three years of high school was $12,267.
- Over 20% of women of color with some college education live in poverty, compared to 3% of all males with similar educational backgrounds.

In 1986 all families maintained by women had median incomes of $13,647 compared to $24,962 for families maintained by men.

According to the Census Bureau, men who head households without a spouse present had 45% more money than women in the same position. Even when men and women maintaining families worked full-time, year round, women had median annual incomes of $21,958 compared to $31,629 for men - a 34% gap.

Two out of three (64%) of all minimum wage earners in the U.S. are women.

- A full-time, year-round worker at minimum wage ($3.35/hour) earns $6,968 a year.
- 5.4 million women work for minimum wage or less. Of those, 2.5 million (46%) work for below minimum wage.
- Among women earning the federal minimum wage or less:
  83.3% are white
  13.7% are Black
  5.6% are Hispanic

Due to inflation, working women earning minimum wage have 30% less real purchasing power today than they did in 1981, when the minimum wage was last raised.

Although Congress originally targeted the minimum wage to equal 50% of the average hourly wage, in 1986 the minimum wage reached an all-time low of 38.3%.

Minimum Wage As A Percent of the
Non-Supervisory, Private-Sector Hourly Wage:

1950's: 50.2%
1960's: 52.2%
1970's: 45.8%
1986: 38.3%

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census
Wider Opportunities for Women
Institute for Policy Studies
The Conference Board
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Research Assistance from:
Dr. Cathleen Love
Stacy Baker

About the Commission: The National Commission on Working Women of Wider Opportunities for Women was created to focus on the needs and concerns of the approximately 80% of women in the work force who are concentrated in low-paying, low-status jobs in service industries, clerical occupations, retail stores, factories, and plants.

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Secretaries and Clerical Workers

A Fact Sheet

In 1986, of the 48.7 million women employed, 14.2 million worked in clerical occupations.

Twenty-nine percent of employed women worked in administrative support and clerical occupations. This occupational category represented the largest single concentration in female employment. Of those 14.2 million, 12.4 million (87%) were white, 1.4 million (9.8%) were black, and 770,000 (5.4%) were of Hispanic origin.

In 1985 the median annual earnings of full-time female secretaries and clerical workers were only $15,157.

This was slightly below $15,624, the median annual earnings of all full-time female workers and greatly below $24,195, the median annual earnings of full-time male workers.

Women constitute 82% of all secretaries and clerical workers. In 1986 male clerical workers earned an average of $119 or 30% more per week than females.

Men who worked in clerical jobs in 1986 had median weekly earnings of $403 per week while women in those same jobs earned $284 per week. Even when men and women worked in the same job category, male earnings were still higher than female earnings.

Job	Median Weekly Earnings Men	Median Weekly Earnings Women	Women's Wages as % of Men's
Secretaries, stenographers, and typists	$322	$286	89%
Computer equipment operators	396	296	75%
Clerical supervisors	521	385	74%
Information clerks	347	250	72%
Adjusters and investigators	460	299	65%

Forty-three percent of all temporary workers are in clerical jobs such as general office clerk, secretary, receptionist and typist.

The temporary help industry is one of the fastest growing in the nation. It is estimated that 5 million people worked as temps in 1986. More than 9 out of 10 temporary clerical workers are women. Two-thirds of them work full-time as temporaries.

The number of full- and part-time homebased clerical workers is growing each year. At least two-thirds of these workers are female.

Nearly 600,000 technical, sales and administrative support persons work entirely at home. Hired as "independent contractors," homebased secretaries, typists, forms processors and data entry personnel usually work for only one company and are paid on a piece-rate basis. A growing number use computers and other electronic equipment. Clerical homeworkers often work longer hours and make less money than in-office workers.

Temporary clerical workers and homebased secretaries and typists face risks as marginalized employees.

- They receive few or no employee benefits such as health insurance, paid vacation and sick leave, or pensions.
- They are isolated from other workers and disconnected from company grievance procedures.
- They often have no status within a company and receive no promotions or training for career advancement.
- Their work flow and income are often unpredictable.
- Many are working part-time involuntarily, unable to find full-time jobs.

In 1987, organized labor is looking to workers in the clerical occupations as an important source of future union membership.

- 16.3% of clerical workers are represented by unions in the U.S.
- 34% of union members are women.
- Secretaries and clerical workers who belong to unions have median weekly earnings 27% higher than those not represented by unions.

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Working with video display terminals (VDTs) can be hazardous to workers' health.

Today there are more than 15 million VDTs in United States offices, and by 1990 over 40 million people will be operating VDTs as part of their jobs. Research studies by NIOSH, 9 to 5 and other agencies document that VDT users frequently experience:

Eye problems—ranging from severe eyestrain to blurred vision to nearsightedness;

Muscle strain and pain—especially in the neck, back, shoulders, arms and wrists. Repeated strain can lead to inflammatory and degenerative ailments such as tenosynovitis and carpal tunnel syndrome in the wrists; and

Stress—increased productivity demands, electronic monitoring, and frustrations of "down time" can lead to severe chronic problems such as ulcers, high blood pressure and heart disease. VDT users in general report a higher incidence of headaches, insomnia, fatigue and tension than non-users.

There has also been evidence of a higher incidence of pregnancy problems (miscarriages, still births, birth defects, etc.) among at least 13 publicly reported "clusters" of VDT users in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

The majority of women in clerical occupations do not advance in their field.

In 1986 there were 14.2 million women in administrative support and clerical positions. While some of them move up to clerical supervisory positions, very few are promoted to managerial positions, which remain male-dominated. Research has found that the main barriers to advancement for clerical workers are:

- lack of information about company advancement policy.
- restricted choices in job education and training.
- poor communication of employee career goals to the employer.

The Office Worker's Bill of Rights

- The right to respect as women and as workers.
- The right to fair and adequate compensation, based on performance and length of service; regular salary reviews; and cost-of-living increases.
- The right to written, accurate job descriptions specifying all job duties, and the right to choose whether to do the personal work of employers.
- The right to fair and equal access to promotion opportunities, including a job-posting program announcing all openings and training programs that give each employee an opportunity for job growth.
- The right to a say over office policies, and the right to participate in organizing to improve our status.
- The right to an effective, systematic grievance procedure.
- The right to fair treatment in every aspect of employment without regard to sex, age, race, or sexual preference.

9 to 5, The Working Woman's Guide to Office Survival, Ellen Cassedy and Karen Nussbaum. By permission.

Sources of Reference:

Bureau of Labor Statistics
Bureau of the Census
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9-5, National Association of Working Women
Service Employees International Union

WOMEN AT WORK

The National Commission on Working Women of Wider Opportunities for Women was created in 1977 to focus on the needs and concerns of the nearly 80% of the female work force concentrated in sales, service, clerical and factory jobs.